

Protect Our Waterfowl Habitat

Designed by



wildlife-forever.org



Great Lakes
RESTORATION



Bureau of Water Quality
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
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**STOP AQUATIC
HITCHHIKERS!™**

DNR PUB WY-014

A Wonderful Way of Life...

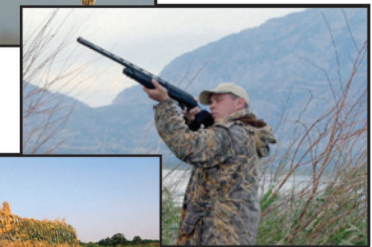
...Worth Preserving

Hunting and outdoor recreation are some of life's greatest pleasures and pastimes. The health of our natural resources is critical and supports America's outdoor way of life. Recreational users need to be aware of the impacts invasive species have on the environment and their costly effects on our economy.



Today many areas are under attack by invasive species like zebra/quagga mussels, Eurasian watermilfoil, curly-leaf pondweed, faucet snails and phragmites. These "hitchhikers" are foreign invasives and have no native predators. Doing severe damage to wetlands, lakes, rivers and streams, the silent invaders have greatly impacted hunting and fishing. At an estimated annual cost of over \$100 billion in the United States, invasive species are one of the greatest threats to our country's natural resources.

Waterfowl hunters can help Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers! and prevent the spread. To conserve our resources, everyone who participates in activities on or near the water needs to: **(1) understand and identify invasive threats, (2) know how to prevent further spread, (3) help educate others who enjoy the outdoors, including the next generation.**



Hunters must take action to preserve habitat and maintain renewable waterfowl populations. Boats, trailers, dogs, and all other hunting equipment can transport invasive species. All that is required are a few simple steps -- **Inspect, Remove, and Drain** -- before and after spending time on the water.

Know the Facts...

Zebra/Quagga mussels filter feed extensively on microscopic organisms called plankton, thereby disrupting the delicate balance of the aquatic ecosystem. Because they eat plankton, critical food for small fish and organisms, zebra/quagga mussels cause problems throughout the food chain. Invaders spread easily. Microscopic larvae called veligers often attach to aquatic plants and hitchhike from un-drained decoys and boat hulls.



Phragmites is a tall non-native perennial grass that can grow to over 15 feet tall and forms dense stands with both live and dead stems. Leaves are elongated and typically 1-1.5 inches wide. Phragmites form a dense network of roots which can spread several feet each year. They can choke out shallow wetlands and waterfowl habitat and should not be used for camouflage or transported on hunting blinds. Seeds and root fragments can easily be spread, causing new infestations.



Faucet snails are small (up to 1/2 inch long) brown or black snails that are oval in shape and may attach to waders, anchors, decoy anchors, boats, and vegetation. They can live out of water for many days by closing the cover or 'operculum' on their shell openings. Faucet snails serve as hosts to parasites which can be deadly to waterfowl that feed on the snails and have been linked to several waterfowl die-off events since 2002 in the Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge.



Invasive aquatic plants, like **Eurasian watermilfoil** and **curly-leaf pondweed** also endanger waterfowl habitat. Plants grow rapidly, and can ruin hunting and fishing habitat in a matter of months. Eurasian watermilfoil and curly-leaf pondweed frequently get wrapped around boat propellers, decoy lines, and cling to trailer axles, bunks and rollers. Always inspect, clean, and remove all vegetation from equipment. New weed beds can start from only small pieces! They can spread by clinging to propellers, trailers, and equipment carrying weeds.

Be a Part of the Solution!

You can help stop the invasion.

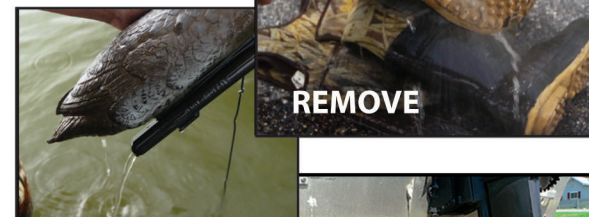
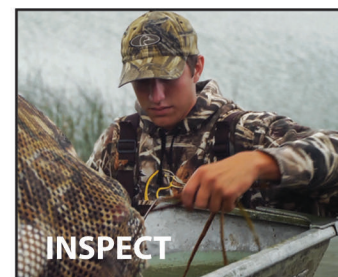
BEFORE launching and BEFORE leaving any water access Wisconsin law requires that you:

✓ **INSPECT** waders, boats, trailers, motor and hunting equipment.

✓ **REMOVE** plants, animals and mud.

✓ **DRAIN** all water from decoys, boats, motor, livewells and other hunting equipment.

✓ **NEVER MOVE** plants or live fish away from a water-body.



It's what you might not see that counts. The larvae of invasive mussels are often microscopic and therefore invisible. Tiny organisms can live for days in water left in boat hulls, livewells, and decoys. If transported to new waters, they can grow and spread threatening your hunting and fishing. Invasive plants and their seeds can cling to decoy bags, mud, hunting dogs and equipment. Inspect and clean gear before transporting.

Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers! to protect our waters and waterfowl habitat. Take these simple steps to ensure that your natural resources remain healthy and vibrant for future generations to come.

✓ **INSPECT** ✓ **REMOVE** ✓ **DRAIN**

This message brought to you by Wildlife Forever.
Join at: www.WildlifeForever.org

Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers! Learn more at:
www.dnr.wi.gov and search "invasive species."

National Invasive Species Information site:
www.InvasiveSpeciesInfo.gov

Report invasive species to the Wisconsin DNR,
invasive.species@wisconsin.gov **or call (608) 266-6437.**



**STOP AQUATIC
HITCHHIKERS!™**

Prevent the transport of aquatic invasive species.
Clean all recreational equipment.

www.ProtectYourWaters.net